

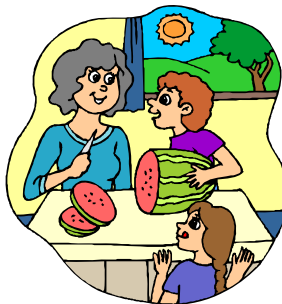
Your Child's Weight

Adapted from Ellyn Satter's book Your Child's Weight: Helping Without Harming

Most of your child's size and shape is determined by heredity: the size and shape of her/his mother and father. You can't (and shouldn't try to) control the size and shape of your child's body. If you try to make your child thin, it can backfire, making your child even heavier. Some children grow up to be relatively tall and slender, others are more solid and muscular, still others are on the heavy side. Any of these variations may be normal for your child. Your job as parent is to be positive and supportive with feeding, and let her grow in the way that nature intended.

Most of the time, children grow normally. You can expect your child to grow at a consistent rate, following along a particular percentile curve on her growth chart. If she veers away from her usual growth pattern and quickly starts to gain weight, you need to look for reasons why. Look for things that may be upsetting her ability to grow properly.

Don't assume that if your child gains weight too quickly that she overeats. It's surprising, but research shows that most children who gain weight when they're older eat *less* when they are growing up than other children. *Trying to get your child to eat less to be thinner is not the solution.* Instead, you need to help your child eat the right amount for her by feeding her well and looking for what's making her growth unpredictable.



To help your child eat get the body that nature intended:

- Maintain a Division of Responsibility in Feeding and Activity
- Offer a variety of foods
- Have structured meals and snacks
- Let your child be active by limiting sedentary activities
- Limit between-meal caloric beverages such as juice and soda
- Make meals worthwhile
- Make sure you are providing your child enough food
- Offer moral support
- Respect eating quirks
- Don't make a big deal about your child's weight and don't let others, either
- Make meals and snacks calm and pleasant



You get to choose what to put on the table. So, choose the food you like and feed the family meals that you enjoy planning, serving, and eating. And remember that any family meal you can pull off is better than no meal at all. Your meals do not have to be feasts and you don't have to please everybody with every food all the time.

Division of Responsibility in Feeding

Parents provide *structure, support* and *opportunities*. Children choose *how much* and *whether* to eat from what the parents provide.

- The parent is responsible for *what, when, where*
- The child is responsible for *how much* and *whether*

Parents' Feeding Jobs:

- Choose and prepare the food
- Provide regular meals and snacks
- Make eating times pleasant
- Show children what they have to learn about food and mealtime behavior
- Do not let children graze for food or beverages between meal and snack times
- Let children grow up to get bodies that are right for them

Fundamental to parents' jobs is trusting children to decide *how much* and *whether* to eat. If parents do their jobs with *feeding*, children will do their jobs with *eating*.

Children's Feeding Jobs:

- Eat
- Eat the amount they need
- Eat the food their parents eat
- Grow predictably
- Learn to behave well at the table

If you are consistent with family meals, over time your child will have a balanced diet. On any given day your child's food intake may look inadequate but over time will average out to be nutritionally adequate.

Source:

Satter, E.M. (2005). *Your Child's Weight: Helping Without Harming*. Madison WI: Kelcy Press.

This document can be made available in alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, or audio tape, by contacting your county Extension office. (TTY 1-800-947-3529)

Prepared by: Terri Miller, Nutrition Program Coordinator,
University of Wisconsin-Extension, Vilas, Forest,
Florence Counties
Editor: Joan E. LeFebvre, Professor, Department of Family
Development, University of Wisconsin-Extension
Reviewer: Ellyn Satter, Registered Dietitian, Family Therapist,
Author
Layout: Penny Otte, Office Operations Associate, Family
Living Area Office, Vilas County

Division of Responsibility in Activity

Children are born loving their bodies, curious about them and inclined to be active. Good parenting with activity preserves those qualities. Parents provide *structure, safety* and *opportunities*. Children choose *how much* and *whether* to move and the *manner* of moving.

- The parent is responsible for *structure, safety* and *opportunities*
- The child is responsible for *how much* and *whether*

Supporting activity is good parenting. Parents' jobs include:

- Develop judgment about normal commotion
- Provide safe places for activity the child enjoys
- Find fun and rewarding family activities
- Provide opportunities to experiment with group activities such as sports
- Set limits on TV but not on reading, writing, artwork, other sedentary activities
- Remove TV and computer from the child's room
- Make children responsible for dealing with their own boredom

Fundamental to parents' jobs is trusting children to decide *how much* to move, the *way* to move and *whether* to be active.

Children's jobs include:

- Be active
- Be more or less active, depending on temperament
- Grow and develop physical capabilities, realizing that some will be more skilled or graceful
- Experiment with activities that are in concert with their growth and development
- Find activities that are right for them

Crossing the lines of the division of responsibility in activity is likely to create problems with movement and distort growth. Trying to control *whether, how much* or the *way* a child moves or how his body turns out crosses the lines. So does catering to a child's expectation that he will be endlessly entertained.

For a further explanation of the division of responsibility, see any of Ellyn Satter's four books; *Your Child's Weight: Helping Without Harming*, *Child of Mine: Feeding With Love and Good Sense*, *Secrets of Feeding a Health Family*, or *How To Get Your Kid to Eat... But Not Too Much*. For more information on Ellyn Satter's materials and programs, see www.EllynSatter.com or call 800-808-7976.

For more information on Parenting and Child Development, contact: Joan E. LeFebvre, Area Family Living Agent, University of Wisconsin, Extension, 330 Court Street, Courthouse, Eagle River WI 54521-8362, 715-479-3653, FAX 715-479-3605, E-Mail joan.lefebvre@ces.uwex.edu March 2009